

Guidelines for Discussing Relevant Topics with an Individual with a Hearing Loss

EAA is inviting members to interview and record discussions with children and students that experience hearing difficulties. With appropriate permission, our goal is to post these dialogues on EAA's website. The purpose is to provide insight into the perspectives and feelings of individuals who live with hearing complications and to offer other students and families an opportunity to view these discussions for support and advocacy.

It is recommended that the taping of the conversation is approximately half an hour in length. Please refer to the tips and guidelines below on how to appropriately administer and record the dialogue.

Interviewing Tips

1. Remember Who You're Serving

Two words: **Your Audience.**

- Although the interview may help you and at the same time help the person you are interviewing (by giving them exposure to your audience), your number one priority should be to enlighten your audience—to get answers that are meaningful from the person you're interviewing that can better serve those who will eventually gain an advantage from what your interviewee has to say.

2. Pre-Interview Homework

There are a few things you should do before the interview happens:

- **Understand a little bit about who you're interviewing.**
As the interviewer, you should know a little bit more than your audience so you can properly introduce the person and ask the right questions.
- **Confirm the details of the interview with the person you're interviewing.** This is especially important if you're interviewing someone in a different time zone. Some things to confirm are:
 - Date and time.
 - Method of communication. (Skype, phone call, person to person, interpreter).
 - Approximate length of interview.
- **Test your recording equipment!**
There is nothing more frustrating for both the interviewer and interviewee than equipment/technology that is not working correctly.

3. Prepare a List of Flexible, Open-Ended Questions and Possible Follow-up Questions

- You should prepare a list of questions that will act as a **template** for the interview—a guide for the path that you want to take from start to finish. **Not** a shopping list that you should stick to 100%.
- For each question, you should come up with two or three possible follow-up questions that might be suitable to ask, depending on the answer. You probably won't get to them all, but it's a good reminder in case the perfect opportunity comes up to dig deeper into a topic of interest.
- As far as the questions themselves, here are a few basic rules:
 - Avoid YES or NO questions.
 - Ask one question at a time.
 - Keep questions relevant but be creative.
 - Rephrase or ask a follow-up question if the person being interviewed appears to be struggling to come up with an answer.
 - Phrase the questions in a way that will allow the person being interviewed to expand.
 - Offer to show the questions to the person you're interviewing ahead of time to make sure they're comfortable with them, which goes along with...

4. Provide a Welcoming Environment

In order to get the best answers from the people you interview, you need to create a welcoming environment.

- A comfortable person, one who feels as if they are just having a conversation with a friend, will be more likely to give deeper information in a more enthusiastic and friendly tone, which benefits everyone.
- Here are some ways to create a comfortable environment for the person you're interviewing:
 - Make sure they know all the details about the interview beforehand.
 - Ask them if they'd like to see the questions first.
 - Have them listen to the pre-written or rehearsed introduction before beginning the interview.
 - Thank them for the interview before you even start and welcome them to your audience.
 - Be enthusiastic and show that you want to conduct the interview!

5. Allow the Person You're Interviewing to Talk

- One of the worse things you can do as an interviewer is take over the interview. You should give the person you're interviewing a chance to communicate as much as possible without interruption. The more they talk—the better.
- It's important to engage in conversation—yes—but there's a line you can cross where you can take too much control of the talking.

6. Listen!

This may sound obvious, but you've got to listen!

- Be engaged in the interview—be more than just a person who reads the questions. This can also lead you to additional interesting dialogue that you hadn't anticipated.
- Focus and don't "drift off" while the other person is talking. This is not good, especially since important follow-up questions may be lost if you lose attention.

7. Sincerely Want to Understand

- Along the same lines, you must truly **want** to understand—and this can be done on different levels.
- On the surface, it's just about understanding what did this person do and why is it important to share?
- On the deeper level, it becomes **why** does this person do what they do, and **how**.

8. Strive for a High-Quality Production

- Bad quality audio or video can **ruin** a fantastic interview. Make sure you are in a quiet environment and the technology produces a clear signal. People may not listen if the quality is poor.
- Do whatever possible (within your budget, of course) to conduct a high-quality interview. Some suggested technology that you can use:
 - iPad
 - Tablet
 - Computer
 - It is not recommended that you use your phone, as too many interruptions may likely occur.

9. Never...

- Ask a Yes or No question.
- Ask more than one question at a time.
- Say "...and my next question is..."

- Allow for an awkward pause or dull moment.
- Be disrespectful to your audience and the person you're interviewing.
- Forget who you're serving.

10. Always Have Fun!

- It will truly help your interview.
- Having fun will make you and the person you're interviewing much more comfortable, which will lead to better content for your audience.
- If you make it seem like a task or a chore, then it will reflect in the interview—and that's not what you want.
- Have fun, enjoy the experience, develop new relationships and generate some amazing content!

Flynn, P. 2012. Modified from <https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/how-to-conduct-an-exceptional-interview/>

Interview Questions

Below are suggested questions that can help to lead to a discussion with the child or student you are interviewing. Remember, to do your homework. Your questions should be unique to the individual you are interviewing.

Elementary aged student not using hearing aid

- Tell us a little about yourself. What do you like to do when you're not in school?
- What are some places where you think you hear well? Does your hearing loss sometimes make it hard for you to hear and talk with other students at school? How about hearing and talking with your teachers? What about at home? Are there any other places where it is hard for you to hear and talk with other people?
- What can other people do to make it easier for you to have a conversation with them?
- How do you help yourself hear what the other kids are saying? What are you doing to advocate for yourself?
- You have a hearing aid – how does it help you? Is there something you wished it would do for you?
- I understand you are not using your hearing aid at this time; is there anything that would help you to use your hearing aid more often?
 - Being around others your age who use hearing aids?
 - Understanding more about how hearing aid technology – how it is developed, how hearing aids are produced, and the various connectivity options to phones, video and other media?
 - Opportunities to discuss hearing challenges and options for addressing them (such as talking in a noisy cafeteria or school-hallway)?
- What do you think that audiologists or your teachers can do to help you use your hearing aids and/or FM at school?

Elementary aged student using hearing aid and FM

- Tell us a little about yourself.
- Tell me a little about your hearing/ears.
- Is it easy or hard for you to hear and talk with other students at school? Can you tell me a little more about that? How about hearing and talking with your teachers? What about at home? Are there any other places where it is hard for you to hear and talk with other others?
- What can other people do to make it easier for you to have a conversation with them?

- Tell me some things you have done to help you hear and have conversations with friends and your teachers? What are you doing to help improve how you hear your teacher, friends, or parents?
- You have a hearing aid – How does it help you? Is there something you wished it would do for you?
- Can you think of any things that might help you feel even more comfortable with your hearing aids?
 - Being around other students who use hearing aids/FM?
 - Understanding more about how hearing aid technology – how it is developed, how hearing aids are produced, and the various connectivity options to phones, video and other devices?
 - Opportunities to discuss how hard it is for you to hear and have conversations in noisy places (such as talking in a noisy cafeteria or school-hallway) and figure out some ways to make this easier?
- You use an FM system at school. How does it help you?

What do you think that audiologists or your teachers can do to help you use your hearing aids and/or FM at school?

Teen student not using hearing aid

- Tell us a little about yourself.
- Briefly describe your hearing loss.
- How does your hearing loss impact your ability to hear and communicate with others – at school, home, community activities?
- What are you doing to advocate for yourself?
- You have a hearing aid – How does it help you? Is there something you wished it would do for you?
- I understand you are not using your hearing aid at this time; is there anything that would help you to use you hearing aid?
 - Being around peers who use the hearing aid?
 - Communicating over the internet with other students who use hearing aids?
 - Understanding more about how hearing aid technology – how it is developed, how hearing aids are produced, and the various connectivity options to phones, video and other media?
 - Opportunities to discuss hearing challenges and options for addressing them (such as talking in a noisy cafeteria or school-hallway)?
- What recommendations do you have for audiologists to help teens understand their hearing loss and use the technology that is available?
- What advice would you give to those who are younger than you who have a hearing loss?

Teen student using hearing aid

- Tell us a little about yourself.
- Briefly describe your hearing loss.
- How does your hearing loss impact your ability to hear and communicate with others – at school, home, community activities?
- What are you doing to advocate for yourself?
- You have a hearing aid – How does it help you? Is there something you wished it would do for you?
- What would you tell a fellow student with hearing loss who is not wearing their amplification? What do you think would help them to start using their amplification?
 - Is it or would it be helpful for you to spend time with peers who also wear hearing aids?

- Are you interested in understanding more about how hearing aid technology – how it is developed, how hearing aids are produced, and the various connectivity options to phones, video and other media?
 - Tell me about your opportunities to discuss hearing challenges and options for addressing them (such as talking in a noisy cafeteria or school-hallway).
- What recommendations do you have for audiologists to help teens understand their hearing loss and use the technology that is available?
- What advice would you give to those who are younger than you who have a hearing loss?